

EMMA EAMES.

By Owen Hackett.

THE function of subsidizing local opera, assumed by the paternal government of a minor German duchy, is performed in the great American metropolis by a few score millionaires, who, besides contributing their regular box subscriptions, as stockholders write their checks for the annual deficit with such unremitting regularity as to constitute, in the estimation of some music lovers, a sort of public philanthropy.

This unfortunate state of operatic finances has had the gratifying result of bringing to the Metropolitan Opera House for the current season, now almost ended, an opera company that includes some of the admittedly unequalled singers of the present day; and among others of wide fame, musical and patriotic Americans have been glad to welcome two talented compatriots in the persons of Miss Emma Eames and Miss Marie Van Zandt, both young yet both of established reputation in European capitals.

Miss Emma Eames (her maiden and professional name) is in private life the wife of Mr. Julian Story, who has won celebrity as a painter of portraits and historical subjects, a Paris and Berlin medallist, and the son of the famous American sculptor and *littérateur*, W. W. Story.

Though an American in fact, Miss Eames has a singularly cosmopolitan history. Her parents were natives of the State of Maine and residents of Boston, where her father was engaged in the practice of the law. It was during a subsequent residence in China that Miss Eames was born, and Shanghai, her birthplace, is the scene of occasional shadowy recollections of certain gorgeously bedecked monstrosities of the joss house, which

seem to have pleased rather than repelled her childish fancy. Be it noted, moreover, that her earliest musical reminiscence is the hearing of a Chinese opera.

When the family returned to Boston Miss Eames commenced her musical studies under the tuition of her mother, whose singing was often applauded in private circles. With the discovery of a voice of extraordinary quality, artistic desire and ambition also took form, and advanced instructors of vocal music and dramatic action were engaged.

Having adopted a serious and settled purpose to engage in a public career, Miss Eames followed of necessity in the footsteps of native talent and went to Europe, where she studied for two years under the eminent Mme. Marchesi, at Paris. Then began the inevitable career of difficulty and disappointment incident to the procuring of a first engagement. Discouragements succeeded each other in rapid succession; but when a manager's pen had finally seemed to spell success, her former trials were found to be only the beginning.

It was in 1888 that Miss Eames signed a first contract for one year with the Opéra Comique of Paris. Parts were assigned and studied, but months rolled by and a first representation was continually deferred. "Presently," was the only answer to her appeals for a *début*. Managerial favoritism was believed to be the reason for this Fabian policy. Be that as it may, to be thus held in check was excruciating to chafing ambition.

While, therefore, this contract was still in force, Miss Eames resolved to take matters into her own hands again. She finally had the triumph



MISS EMMA EAMES.

From a photograph by Falk, New York.

of receiving the offer of a two years' engagement at the very goal of her ambition—the Grand Opéra. She hesitated not an instant—a stroke of the pen, and it was done.

She was now in danger of falling between two legal stools; her original contract had yet some months to run, and under either she might be called upon to appear at any moment, to be restrained by the other. With the new indenture in her possession, Miss Eames went directly to the Comique. She relates with much

spirit the details of that momentous interview, wherein she demanded that her contract be instantly canceled. It was only when she fell back on the peculiarly feminine art of obstinacy, and with her most dramatic force declared she would not leave the office until her demand was acceded to, that the administration gave in and canceled the contract.

The spirit exhibited throughout this experience is but one of many striking examples of Miss Eames's notable force of character, of which

another is furnished by the circumstances of her *début* at the Opéra.

"Romeo et Juliette," *maître* Gounod's latest work, was in active preparation at the Grand Opéra, and it was finally produced late in 1888, with Mme. Patti engaged to lend additional *éclat* to the production. It was understood that the Diva was to retire after twelve representations. Her part was therefore assigned to Miss Eames as her substitute; but when Patti had fulfilled her specified term, a hearing was first given to another *débutante*, who suddenly retired into the obscurity of failure

after two performances. On precisely the same plane of opportunity as was her successor, she had been totally eclipsed by the dazzling light of the most famous singer of the world, and it was in the shadow thus cast that Miss Eames was suddenly called upon to make her first entry on any stage. Moreover, as the latest of the *Juliettes* stood in the wings awaiting her cue on the fateful 13th of March, she could not but remember that behind her was an interval of four weeks since her one dress rehearsal had been held.

Even by those unfamiliar with the difficult score of this beautiful work of Gounod's, the exacting nature of the dramatic side of the opera can be readily conceived. Miss Eames relates that she entered and intoned her opening recitative entirely oblivious of her surroundings. Then, with the first pause, came the overwhelming consciousness that the solemn obscurity of the auditorium at rehearsal time had given way to the glare of a hundred lights, and the empty *loges* and the cloth draped stalls were now peopled with a thousand critical auditors intent with ear and eye on her every note and gesture. She gave a gasp, as much of surprise as of relief. "There! I've done it!" was her thought, and not until then did the crucial test begin. Her success was assured—for a novice it was complete.

Another instance of Miss Eames's successful temerity is furnished by her first appearance as *Marguerite*, with no full rehearsal, and but one imperfect orchestral rehearsal without either the *Faust* or the *Mephistophèle*. Still another, by her *début* in "Otello" at Covent Garden, London, in July, 1891. On that occasion Miss Eames mastered her part in two weeks; she had not even an orchestral rehearsal, and was guided solely by her ob-



EMMA EAMES AS JULIETTE.
From a photograph by Downey, London.



EMMA EAMES AS MARGU RITE.

From a photograph by Chalot, Paris.

servation of Mme. Albani's three performances of *Desdemona*, with which the production was initiated.

It was six days after this London triumph, on July 29th, that the cable dispatches described how the famous young soprano had proceeded quietly to the Registrar's office in London to be wedded to Mr. Story. Three days later the religious ceremony was performed by the successor of the ditty famed Vicar of Bray.

Miss Eames possesses a soprano voice of the widest range, great power and sterling timbre—qualities

which entitle her to the technical appellation of "dramatic soprano"; but her freshness of voice and manner, her beauty of face and figure, and a certain romance of personality enable her for the present to approach more closely to the ideals of "lyric" parts.

Her singing is invariably true. Her vocalization in stronger or more florid passages is certain and bold, while her beauty of phrasing and delicacy of treatment fulfill every desire. Her dramatic action is impressively strong—above all, sincere. In this, as in all things, Miss Eames

is to a marked degree an exponent of good taste. Only ripe experience is needed to supply that untrammelled breadth and spontaneity of action that distinguish the finished dramatic artist.

Miss Eames herself, with frank modesty, supplies by indirection as just a criticism of herself as it is possible to make :

"With time, my voice will become fuller, richer, more passionate, my action more dramatic. The true artist is never satisfied with himself. Even though the public may see no faults, he himself will always know

where he can improve and perfect. When I feel that I can do no better, when I am at the very apogee of my powers—I retire!" This is artistic conscience—the only true secret of success.

A different phase of this conscientiousness was displayed in an incident of the present season. Two days before the announcement of a particular representation a slight cold seized upon the singer. How easily a physician's certificate is procured the opera going public have reason to suspect, but Miss Eames, rather than disappoint the public and the management, duly presented herself at the opera house. Then only did she learn that the Messrs. de Reszke both had furnished documentary evidences of a similar ailment. The *prima donna* saved the bill, at the trying cost of singing to a tenor with whom she had never rehearsed.

The consideration for the rights and interests of others that was here exhibited sometimes obtrudes itself to the detriment of a very American characteristic—shrewd business talent. The same talent is in truth but a specific form of practical good sense, and of this there is abundant evidence in Miss Eames's composition. To a dauntless determination and courage she unites the valuable quality of caution, on the principle of the historic pioneer: "First I must convince myself that I can master a role—then *nothing* can keep me from singing it!" To exemplify this statement and at the same time to illustrate her versatility, it is only necessary to enumerate some of her leading parts. These are the *Juliette* and the *Marguerite* of the venerable Gounod; *Desdemona*, in the "Otello" of the melodious Verdi; *Colombe*, in the "Ascanio" of that most brilliant of latter day composers, Saint-Saens; the *Zaire* of Veronge de la Nux; *Elsa*, in the early "Lohengrin" of the supreme Wagner, and *Santuzza* in the "Cavalleria Rusticana" of that rising youthful star, Mascagni.

In person Miss Eames is tall of stature, symmetrical of outline, grace-



MISS EMMA EAMES AS SANTUZZA.

From a photograph by Falk, New York.



MISS EMMA EAMES AS ELSA.

From a photograph by Falk, New York.

ful and elegant of movement. Her dark hair harmonizes well with brown ; her eyes, large and kindling, are of a decided blue, and her complexion is so freshly colored by exuberant health as to court the light of day. Regular features, a mobile countenance, and speaking eyes are all animated with a sparkling vivacity in conversation, which emphasizes the beauty that is so apparent across the footlights.

A significant and altogether perfect picture of Miss Eames is photo-

graphed in memory. It was in her husband's studio, picturesque in itself, with the wife seated before a great pier glass and framed by its gilded molding. As she talked in her own brilliant manner, impetuosity and overmastering spirit were constantly destroying the pose she was endeavoring to keep, while her husband busily blocked out in sepia the foundation of his wife's portrait.

In their little home in the American quarter of Paris there are dogs and birds and various other pets for

master and mistress, and before it there is a garden full of roses. "And if," says Miss Eames, "I stumble over a difficulty, I have only to run to Gounod and say, '*Cher maître*, I am in trouble,' and I have an hour—two, three, if I wish."

It is the picture of this *cher maître* that Miss Eames carries with her everywhere and displays most conspicuously, and upon it is inscribed over the autograph of the great master's name, "*A ma petite charmante Juliette.*"



A RAILROAD INCIDENT

SHE sat beside me on the train ;
 Her eyes were shut, her face was fair,
 Her lips were red as cherries ripe,
 Of soft brown color was her hair.

Her face a look of sadness wore ;
 I spied a tear upon her cheek.
 Alas ! I too was sad at heart,
 And so at last resolved to speak.

"Fair maid," I said, "I, like to thee,
 Am suffering from an aching heart ;
 My sympathy I'd gladly give,
 Then pray thy secret woes impart."

"I thank you kindly, sir," she said,
 "I am enduring pain, 'tis true,
 But 'tis no trouble with my heart—
 It's only that my shoes are new !"

Douglas Hemingway.